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A BROWNING TREASURE BOOK

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A BROWNING TREASURE BOOK

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LONDON: GEORGE BELL AND SONS
1906

A 3683

CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

. . . On the works of mighty bards I gazed,
In the first joy at finding my own thoughts
Recorded, my own fancies justified,
And their aspirings but my very own.

Pauline.

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AMBITION AND IDEALS

Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

* * * * *

The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin.

The Statue and the Bust.

The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life:
Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?

* * * * *

In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power.
And thus we half-men struggle.

Andrea del Sarto.

Ambition and Ideals.

Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

How very hard it is to be
A Christian! Hard for you and me.
—Not the mere task of making real
That duty up to its ideal,
Effecting thus, complete and whole,
A purpose of the human soul—
For that is always hard to do;
But hard, I mean, for me and you
To realize it, more or less,
With even the moderate success
Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the aims of life.
"The aim is greater," you will say,
"And so more arduous every way."
—But the importance of their fruits
Still proves to man, in all pursuits,
Proportional encouragement.

Easter Day.

My business is not to re-make myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

A great is better than a little aim.

* * * * *

One great aim, like a guiding star, above—
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
His manhood to the height that takes the prize.
Colombe's Birthday.

With an aim—not being what I am.
Pauline.

But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And, baffled, get up and begin again—
So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.
Love in a Life.

I would have been—something, I know not what:
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.
Paracelsus.

Look one step onward, and secure that step.
Paracelsus.

Endeavour to be good, and better still,
And best! Success is naught, endeavour's all.
Red Cotton Night-Cap Country.

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find Him!

A Grammarian's Funeral.

Better have failed in the high aim,
Than vulgarly in the low aim succeed.

The Inn Album.

What stops my despair?
This;—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!

Saul.

I envy—how I envy him whose soul
Turns its whole energies to some one end,
To elevate an aim, pursue success
However mean!

Pauline.

Let each task present
Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
In profitless waiting for the god's descent,
But have some idol of thine own to dress
With their array.

Paracelsus.

Ambition and Ideals.

CHANGE

Change must proceed whether for good or ill.

Paracelsus.

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable
Name?
Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with
hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee Who art ever
the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that thy
power expands?

Abt Vogler.

They [Greek statues] are perfect—how else? they shall
never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished.
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

Old Pictures in Florence.

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure;
What entered into thee
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

Nothing endures: the wind moans, saying so;
We moan in acquiescence: there's life's pact,
Perhaps probation—do *I* know?
God does: endure His act!

James Lee's Wife.

Oh world, where all things pass and naught abides,
Oh life, the long mutation—is it so?
Is it with life as with the body's change?
—Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's grace,
Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
But silently the first gift dies away,
And though the new stays, never both at once.

Luria.

Change.

Rejoice that man is hurled
From change to change unceasingly,
His soul's wings never furled!

James Lee's Wife.

Ah, Love, but a day
  And the world has changed!
The sun 's away,
  And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
  And the sky 's deranged:
Summer has stopped.

Look in my eyes!
  Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
  Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
  In the good and true,
With the changing year?

James Lee's Wife.

DOUBT

If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time: I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.

* * * * *

Just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road.

Paracelsus.

How can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?
Just when we are safest, there 's a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus ending from Euripides—
And that's enough.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

I still
Stand in the cloud and, while it wraps
My face, ought not to speak perhaps:

Easter Eve.

What's midnight doubt before the dayspring's faith?

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

You call for faith:
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?
By life and man's free will, God gave for that!

* * * * *

What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself—
If finally I have a life to show.

* * * * *

All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this? Doubt.
It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for and show forth
Whatever be the process to that end.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

I wish indeed God's kingdom come—
The day when I shall see appear
His bidding, as my duty, clear
From doubt! And it shall dawn, that day.

Easter Day.

FAITH

Faith may be, one agrees,
A touch-stone for God's purposes.

Easter Day.

A scientific faith 's absurd,
—Frustrates the very end 'twas meant
To serve. So, I would rest content
With a mere probability,
But, probable; the chance must lie
Clear on one side,—lie all in rough,
So long as there be just enough
To pin my faith to, though it hap
Only at points: from gap to gap
One hangs up a huge curtain so,
Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
Foldless and flat along the wall.
What care I if some interval
Of life less plainly may depend
On God? I'd hang there to the end.

Easter Day.

You must mix some uncertainty
With faith if you would have faith be.

Easter Day.

We, the better part
Have chosen, though 'twere only hope.

Easter Day.

How could I praise,
If such as I might understand.

Johannes Agricola in Meditation.

Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at its beginning.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit
In power, peace, pleasantness, and length of days.
I find that positive belief does this
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

If you desire faith—then you've faith enough.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Faith. Faith is my waking life;
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
We know, but waking 's the main point with us,
And my provision 's for life's waking part.

* * * * *

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great,
My faith 's still greater, then my faith 's enough.
Bishop Blougram's Apology.

The flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.
Paracelsus.

Call this—God, then call that—soul, and both—the only facts for me.
Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power of proving, proves them such.
La Saisiaz.

Hold on, hope hard in the subtle thing
That 's spirit.
Pacchiarotto.

God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that.
Paracelsus.

Belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself:
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Why ever make man's good distinct from God's?
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?

Paracelsus.

With me, faith means perpetual unbelief
Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows.

Epilogue.

It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance.

Paracelsus.

You know (he cries), this is not love, sirs! It is faith,
The feeling that there's God, He reigns and rules
Out of this low world.

The Ring and the Book.

Faith. The acknowledgement of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it.

A Death in the Desert.

The sense within me that I owe a debt
Assures me—somewhere must be Somebody
Ready to take His due.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

Religion 's all or nothing: it 's no mere smile
O' contentment, sigh of aspiration . . .
. . . rather stuff
O' the very stuff, life of life and self of self.

Mr. Sludge the Medium.

We come and go, outside there 's Somebody that stays;
A circumstance which ought to make us mind our ways.

Fifine at the Fair.

I traced . . .
The harvestings of truth's stray ears
Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
Bound together for belief.

Christmas Eve.

I find, 'mid dangers manifold,
The good bark answers to the helm
Where faith sits.

Easter Day.

He who did most shall bear most, the strongest shall
stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh,
that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall
be
A Face like my face that receives thee, a Man like to
me.
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like
this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! see the
Christ stand!

* * * * * *

I believe it! 'Tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who
receive:
In the first is the last, in Thy will is my power to
believe.
All 's one gift: Thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt
to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to
the air.

Saul.

Faith. That way
Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it be meant a road;
While, if he views it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakable! what 's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith?

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven.

* * * * *

What procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow man,
But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?

A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.

Praise be thine! **Faith.**
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
Perfect I call Thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, re-make, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!
Rabbi Ben Ezra.

GROWTH

Man was made to grow, not stop;
That help he needed once, and needs no more,
Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:
For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
This imports solely, man should mount on each
New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,
The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done:
And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.
A Death in the Desert.

What is left for us, save, in growth
Of soul, to rise . . .
From the gift looking to the giver,
And from the cistern to the river,
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity?
Christmas Eve.

When the fight begins within himself, Growth.
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
A master to obey, a course to take,
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
From what once seemed good, to what now proves best,
How could man have progression otherwise?

* * * * *

Man creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
And in this striving . . .
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's, and not the beasts: God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
Such progress could no more attend his soul
Were all its struggles after found at first
And guesses changed to knowledge absolute.

A Death in the Desert.

Growth.

Progress is
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.

* * * * *

But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God.

Paracelsus.

The race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's clear plan.

Old Pictures in Florence.

Thus looking within and around me I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of man's nothing perfect to God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to His feet.

Saul.

DIVINE GUIDANCE

I know Thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy.

* * * * *

God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that.
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble.

Paracelsus.

Great Works, the Secret and Sublime forsooth,
Let others prize: . . . What are these at best, beside
God helping, God directing everywhere?

* * * * *

I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send His hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In His good time!

Paracelsus.

Divine Guidance.

I have always had one lode-star; now,
As I look back, I see that I have halted
Or hastened as I looked towards that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God:

* * * * *

I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
From fear: and thence I date my trust in signs
And omens, for I saw God everywhere;
And I can only lay it to the fruit
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt
Even His being—e'en the while I felt
His presence, never acted from myself,
Still trusted in a hand to lead me through
All danger; and this feeling ever fought
Against my weakest reason and resolve.

Pauline.

A touch divine
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod;
Visibly through His garden walketh God.

Sordello.

I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best.

Saul.

Divine Guidance

I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze.

* * * * *

Subsisteth ever
God's care above, and I exult
That God, by God's own ways occult
May—doth, I will believe—bring back
All wanderers to a single track.
Meantime, I can but testify
God's care for me—no more, can I—
It is but for myself I know.

Christmas Eve.

From childhood I have been possessed
By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
As from without some master, so it seemed,
Repressed or urged its current: this but ill
Expresses what would I convey: but rather
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
So became manifest.

Paracelsus.

The great beacon-light God sets in all,
The conscience of each bosom.

Strafford.

Divine Guidance

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

Cristina.

HUMAN HELP AND INFLUENCE

Hold hard by truth . . .
Do out the duty! Through such souls alone
God stooping shows sufficient of His light
For us i' the dark to rise by.

The Ring and the Book.

'Tis in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
Eventually to follow; as the sea
Waits ages in its bed till some one wave
Out of the multitudinous mass extends,
The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps
Over the strip of sand which could confine
Its fellows so long time: thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained.

Paracelsus.

Who means to help must still support the load.

Sordello.

Human Help and Influence.

For I, a man with men am linked
And not a brute with brutes; no gain
That I experience must remain
Unshared.

Christmas Eve.

There's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

I hold
With you, the setting forth such praise to be
The natural end or service of a man,
And hold such praise is best attained, when man
Attains the general welfare of his kind.

* * * * *

You are endowed with faculties which bear
Annexed to them, as 'twere a dispensation
To summon meaner spirits to do their will
And gather round them at their need: inspiring
Such with a love themselves can never feel.

Paracelsus.

Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out.

Fra Lippo Lippi.

What a thing friendship is, world without end!

The Flight of the Duchess.

A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one;
And those who live as models for the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.

Luria.

God bless in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
With love for all men.

Pippa Passes.

'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you: they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you
Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
And all at once they leave you, and you know them!
We are so fooled, so cheated.

Paracelsus.

A solitary great man 's worth the world.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

Saints to do us good,
Must be in Heaven, I seem to understand:
We never find them saints before.

The Ring and the Book.

Human Help and Influence.

And seeing somewhat of man's state—has been
For the worst of us, to say they so have seen;
For the better, what it was they saw: the best
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest.

Sordello.

God gives each man one life like a lamp, then gives
That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted—hold high, wave wide,
Its comfort for others to share!

Muléykeh.

If I yet live it is for good, more love
Through me to men.

A Death in the Desert.

What should delight me like the news of friends
Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight?

Paracelsus.

How plainly is true greatness charactered.
. . . Strength sharing least the secret of itself!
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could save,
Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Luria.

I was not born
Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
From aught which marked me out apart from men:
I would have lived their life, and died their death,
Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
Taught me to know mankind and know myself:

* * * * *

He lived
Too much advanced before his brother men:
They kept him still in front: 'twas for their good.
But yet a dangerous station.

Paracelsus.

Just as I cannot till myself convinced,
Impart conviction, so, to deal forth joy
Adroitly, needs must I know joy myself!

Ferishtah's Fancies.

But do not cut yourself from human weal!
You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
To spend his life in service to his kind
For no reward of theirs, unbound to them
By any ties . . . . no—
There are strange punishments for such.

Paracelsus.

JUDGEMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee—
Thee and no other,—stand or fall by them!
That is the part for thee.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

. . . Shall one like me
Judge hearts like yours?

Paracelsus.

What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.

Sordello.

The inward work and worth
Of any mind what other mind may judge
Save God, Who only knows the thing He made,
The veritable service He exacts.

The Ring and the Book.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own.

A Light Woman.

Judgement and Responsibility.

Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course:
Manhood with action follows: but 'tis dreary,
To have to alter our whole life in age—
The time past, the strength gone!

Strafford.

Is God mocked,
Shall I take on me to change His tasks,
And dare, despatched to a river-head
For a simple draught of the element,
Neglect the thing for which He sent,
And return with another thing instead?—
Saying, "Because the water found,
Welling up from underground,
Is mingled with the taints of earth,
. . . Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy,
And bring Thee a chalice I found, instead."

Christmas Eve.

Hadst thou learned
What God accounteth happiness,
Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
What hell may be his punishment
For those who doubt if God invent
Better than they. Let such men rest
Content with what they judged the best.

Easter Day.

Judgement and Responsibility.

God will estimate
Success one day: and in the mean time—you?
Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

KNOWLEDGE

'Tis the taught already that profits by teaching.

* * * * *

Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts which we bow before:
This last knows better—true, but my fact is,
'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already.

Christmas Eve.

They *know* and therefore rule:—I, too, will know!

* * * * *

Know, not for knowing's sake,
But to become a star to men for ever;
Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds.

Paracelsus.

Knowledge. Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.

A Death in the Desert.

Never fear but there's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture.

Cristina.

What good of giving knowledge if, because
O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?

* * * * *

Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
He could not, what he knows now, know at first:
What he considers what he knows to-day,
Come but to-morrow, he will find mis-known:
Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
Because he lives, which is to be a man,
Set to instruct himself by his past self.

A Death in the Desert.

Dare aspire to *know*
And this aim shall differ from a host
Of aims alike in character and kind,
Mostly in this,—that in itself alone
Shall its reward be.

Paracelsus.

'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise. Knowledge
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already.

Christmas Eve.

Ignorance is not innocence but sin,

* * * * *

Ignorance
Being, I hold, sin ever, small or great.

The Inn Album.

LIFE

The common problem, yours, mine, everyone's
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means:—a very different thing.
Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Only be sure thy daily life,
In its peace or in its strife
Never shall be unobserved.
The Flight of the Duchess.

Man might live at first
The animal life, but is there nothing more?
In due time let him critically learn
How he lives: and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
Cleon.

Life must needs be borne,—I also will that man become aware
Life has worth incalculable, every moment that he spends
So much gain or loss for that next life, which on this life depends. Life.

La Saisiaz.

Must life be ever just escaped, which should
Have been enjoyed?—nay, might have been, and would
Each purpose ordered right.

Sordello.

Then life is, to wake not sleep,
Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level where blindly creep
Things perfected more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep.

Reverie.

Is this our ultimate stage, or starting place
To try man's foot, if it will creep or climb,
Mid obstacles in seeming, points that prove
Advantage for who vaults from low to high,
And makes the stumbling-block a stepping-stone.

* * * * *

Life is probation and the earth no goal
But starting point of man.

The Ring and the Book.

Life I needs must blend the quality of man
To quality of God, and so assist
Mere human sight to understand my Life.
Ferishtah's Fancies.

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!

* * * * *

Each deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world.
Saul.

I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on.
In a Balcony.

One takes
A whole life, sees what course it makes
Mainly, and not by fits and starts—
In spite of stoppage, which imparts
Fresh value to the general speed.
Easter Day.

This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank, it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
Fra Lippo Lippi.

Thus life is best for me, . . .
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

A good thing or a bad thing, life is which?
Shine and shade, happiness and misery
Battle it out then: which force beats, I ask?

Ferishtah's Fancies.

We are in God's hand.
How strange now looks the life He makes us lead:
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel He laid the fetter: let it lie!

Andrea del Sarto.

—Life, my whole sole chance to prove—although at man's apparent cost—
What is beauteous and what ugly, right to strive for, right to shun,
Fit to help and fit to hinder,—prove my forces every one,
Good and evil,—learn life's lesson, hate of evil, love of good,
As 'tis set me, understand so much as may be understood.

La Saisiaz

Life.

God thought on me His child:
Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one
To the minutest.

Johannes Agricola in Meditation.

Take what is, trust what may be!
That's Life's true lesson.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

His sprites created
God grants to each a sphere to be its world,
Appointed with the various objects needed
To satisfy its own peculiar want.

Paracelsus.

We find great things are made of little things,
And little things go lessening till at last
Comes God behind them.

Mr. Sludge the Medium.

There's the Heaven for me.
. . . . To live out one's life
I' the world here, with the chance,—whether by pain
Or pleasure be the process, long or short
The time, august or mean the circumstance
To human eye,—of learning how set foot
Decidedly on some one path to Heaven.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

Could I but live again,
Twice my life over,
Would I once strive again?
Would not I cover
Quietly, all of it—
Greed and ambition—
So from the pall of it,
Pass to fruition.

Only a learner,
Quick one or slow one,
Just a discerner,
I would teach no one.
I am earth's native:
No rearranging it!
I be creative?
Chopping and changing it?

Pisgah Sights.

Be brave . . .
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker intellect,—
Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts!

Paracelsus.

Life. Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this?

By the Fire-side.

Life means—learning to abhor
The false and love the true.

Fifine at the Fair.

The world lies under me: and nowhere I detect
So great a gift as this—God's own—of human life.

Ivan Ivanovitch.

Venice seems a type
Of Life—'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe
As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and nought:
'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life—as good you sought
To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone
Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
As hinder Life the evil with the good
Which makes up Living, rightly understood.

Sordello.

LOVE (Divine and Human)

I learned my own deep error: love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution: love preceding
Power, and with much power, always much more love.
Paracelsus.

Man's part is plain—to send Love forth—astray perhaps:—
No matter!—he has done his part.
Ferishtah's Fancies.

I end with—"Love is all" and "Death is naught."
Fifine at the Fair.

For God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love.
Evelyn Hope.

Love.

Never any more
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive:
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun:
I as little understand
Love's decay.

In a Year.

Such ever was love's way: to rise, it stoops.

* * * * *

Man should, for love's sake, in love's strength believe.

A Death in the Desert.

Best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
Myself?

Pippa Passes.

God who registers the cup
Of mere cold water, for His sake
To a disciple rendered up,—
Disdains not His own thirst to slake
At the poorest love was ever offered:
And because my heart I proffered,
With true love trembling at the brim,
He suffers me to follow Him
For ever.

Christmas Eve.

Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world
And say, love can go unrequited here!

Colombe's Birthday.

For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God 's aglow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before!

James Lee's Wife.

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt His own love can compete with it?

* * * * *

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou;
—so wilt Thou!

Saul.

Love. All love assimilates the soul to what it loves,

Paracelsus.

Too much love there can never be.

* * * * *

Be love less or more
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
Or opes it wide as he pleases, but
Love's sum remains what it was before.

Christmas Eve.

So let us say, not—"*Since we know we love;*"
But rather, "*Since we love, we know enough.*"

* * * * *

For why? The creature and the Creator stand
Rightly related so. Consider well!
Were knowledge all thy faculty, then God
Must be ignored: love gains Him at first leap.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

The thing that seems
Mere misery, under human schemes,
Becomes, regarded by the light
Of love, as very near, or quite
As good a gift as joy before.

Easter Day.

Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving.

One Word More.

For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear . . .
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love.

A Death in the Desert.

If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you.
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

James Lee's Wife.

Love which on earth, amid all the shows of it,
Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.

Christmas Eve.

God be thanked, the meanest of His creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman that he loves her.

One Word More.

Love So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying—"O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
Thou hast no power nor mayest conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
An Epistle.

All love renders wise
In its degree: from love which blends with love—
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself
In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored.
I say such love is never blind; but rather
Alive to every, the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.
Paracelsus.

True love works never for the loved one so,
Nor spares skin-surface, smoothening truth away.
Love bids touch truth, endure truth and embrace
Truth, though, embracing truth, love crush itself.
Red Cotton Night-Cap Country.

—Love is the only good in the world.

The Flight of the Duchess.

In every love, or soon or late
Soul must awake and seek out soul for soul.

The Inn Album.

I mind how love repaired all ill,
Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends
With parents, brothers, children, friends!

Easter Day.

There is no good of life but love—but love!
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;
Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!

In a Balcony.

We acknowledge Christ—
A proof we comprehend His love, a proof
We had such love already in ourselves,
Knew first what else we should not recognize.
'Tis mere projection from man's inmost mind,
And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,
Becomes accounted somewhat out of him.

A Death in the Desert.

Love. Save him, dear God: it will be like Thee: bathe him
In light and life! Thou art not made like us;
We should be wroth in such a case; but Thou
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts
Which come unsought, and will not pass away!

Paracelsus.

LONGING AFTER GOD

What is it that I hunger for but God?
My God, my God! let me for once look on Thee
As though naught else existed, we alone!
And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark
Expands till I can say,—Even from myself
I need Thee, and I feel Thee, and I love Thee.
I do not plead my rapture in Thy works
For love of Thee, nor that I feel as one
Who cannot die: but there is that in me
Which turns to Thee, which loves or which should love.

* * * * *

O Thou pale Form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed!
I have denied Thee calmly—do I not
Pant when I read of thy consummate power?
And burn to see Thy calm pure truths out flash
The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy?
Do I not shake to hear aught question Thee?
If I am erring, save me! madden me!
Take from me powers and pleasures, let me die
Ages,—so I see Thee.

Pauline.

Longing after God.

You own your instincts? Why, what else do I,
Who want, am made for, and must have a God,
Ere I can be aught, do aught. No mere name
Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,
To wit, a relation from that thing to me,
Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of ours!

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

MUSIC

For music (which is earnest of a heaven,
Seeing we know emotions strange by it,
Not else to be revealed), is like a voice,
A low voice calling fancy, as a friend,
To the green woods in the gay summer-time.

Pauline.

There is no truer truth obtainable
By Man than comes of music.

* * * * *

How we feel, hard and fast as what we Know—
This were the prize and is the puzzle!—which
Music essays to solve.

* * * * *

Such a "Fugue" would catch
Soul heavenwards up.

Charles Avison.

Music.

Who hears music, feels his solitude
Peopled at once.

Balaustion's Adventure.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once, we shall hear it by-and-by.

* * * * *

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe;
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

Abt Vogler.

I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play.

A Toccata of Galuppi's.

I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.

Paracelsus.

Music.

NATURE

Thou wilt remember one warm morn, when winter
Crept aged from the earth, and spring's first breath
Blew soft from the moist hills: the blackthorn boughs,
So dark in the bare wood, when glistening
In the sunshine were white with coming buds,
Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the banks
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.

Pauline.

Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching air,
The clear, dear breath of God that loveth us,
Where small birds reel and winds take their delight!
Water is beautiful, but not like air.

Pauline.

You've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no?

Fra Lippo Lippi.

Then all is still: earth is a wintry clod: Nature.
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
. . . . And God renews
His ancient rapture. Thus He dwells in all.

Paracelsus.

One spring wind unbinds the mountain snow
And comforts violets in their hermitage.

Paracelsus.

If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed
Within yourself, when you return Him thanks.

Fra Lippo Lippi.

Nature.

There 's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us.

Cleon.

Scarce one
Was able, in a million,
To feel that any marvel lay
In objects round his feet all day.

* * * * *

All partial beauty was a pledge
Of beauty in its plenitude:
. . . God's work, be sure
No more spreads wasted, than falls scant!
He filled, did not exceed, man's want
Of beauty in this life.

* * * * *

Did God pronounce earth "very good"?
Needs must it be, while understood
For man's preparatory state.

Easter Day.

I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility.—Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time. . . .
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's.

A Soul's Tragedy.

O world, as God has made it! All is beauty: Nature.
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
The Guardian Angel.

Merciful God, that made the sun and stars,
The waters and the green delights of earth.
A Blot on the 'Scutcheon.

Day!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away:
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.
Pippa Passes.

God made all the creatures, and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are His children, one family here.
Saul.

Nature.

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now !

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dew drops—at the bent spray's edge—
That 's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture !
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noon-tide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

Home-thoughts from Abroad.

God must be glad one loves His world so much.

Pippa Passes.

OBEDIENCE AND DUTY

I profess no other share
In the selection of my lot, than this
My ready answer to the will of God
Who summons me to be His organ.

* * * * *

Presume not to serve God apart from such
Appointed channel as He wills.

* * * * *

None
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
Remained implied in it: but now you fail,
And we, who prate about that will, are fools!
In short, God's service is established here
As He determines fit, and not your way—
And this you cannot brook!

Paracelsus.

Deeds, let escape, are never to be done.

Sordello.

Obedience and Duty.

'Twill be, I feel,
Only in moments that the duty 's seen
As palpably as now: the months, the
Of painful indistinctness are to come.

* * * * *

What matters happiness?
Duty! There 's man's one moment.
King Victor and King Charles.

God spoke, and gave us the word to keep,
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward
Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
Holy Cross Day.

Duty and love, one broadway, were the best,
Who doubts? But one or other was to choose.
I chose the darkling half, and wait the rest
In that new world where light and darkness fuse.
Bifurcation.

I have God's bidding to perform: but mind
And body, all of me, though made and meant
For that soul service, must consult, concert
With my own self and nobody beside,
How to effect the same: God helps not else.
Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

Prove to me, only that the least
Command of God is God's indeed,
And what injunction shall I need
To pay obedience?

Obedience and Duty.

Easter Day.

OLD AGE AND DEATH

So at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage,
How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart.

* * * * *

Ponder on the entire past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul,
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then——

The Flight of the Duchess.

Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
We whom God loves?

A Death in the Desert.

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half: trust God: see all nor be afraid!"

* * * * *

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death, nor be afraid!

* * * * *

So take and use thy work;
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned;
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

Old Age and Death.

. . . Imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time.

Cleon.

You never know what life means till you die;
Even throughout life 'tis death that makes life live,
Gives it whatever the significance.

* * * * *

Yes, everybody that leaves life sees all
Softened and bettered: so with other sights:
To me at least was never evening yet
But seemed far beautifuller than its day.

* * * * *

God the strong, God the beneficent,
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,
Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,
Till at the last He puts forth might and saves.

The Ring and the Book.

The past indeed
Is past, gives way before Life's best and last,
The all-including Future! . . . What were life
Did soul stand still therein, forego her strife
Through the ambiguous Present to the goal
Of some reconciling Future? Soul,
Nothing has been which shall not bettered be
Hereafter——

* * * * *

By proved potency that still
Makes perfect, be assured, come what come will,
What once lives never dies—what here attains
To a beginning, has no end, still gains
And never loses aught: when, where and how—
Lies in Law's lap. What's death then?
Even now
With so much knowledge is it hard to bear
Brief interposing ignorance? Is care
For a creation found at fault first there——

Gerard de Lairesse.

As life wanes, all its cares and strife and toil
Seem strangely valueless!

* * * * *

How should this Earth's life prove my only sphere?
Can I so narrow sense but that in life
Soul still exceeds it?

Pauline.

Only grant my soul may carry high through death her cup unspilled.

La Saisiaz.

Old Age and Death.

There 's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That when this life is ended begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through Earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene,—
When our faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
And I have had troubles enough for one.

Old Pictures in Florence.

Earth fades! Heaven breaks on me: I shall stand next
Before God's throne: the moment 's close at hand
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its Maker; leave
To clear up the long error of a life,
And choose one happiness for evermore.

Strafford.

And, though this weak soul sink and darkness whelm, Old Age and Death.
Some little word shall light it, raise aloft,
To where I clearlier see and better love,
As I again go o'er the tracts of thought.

* * * * *

And unknown secrets will be trusted me,
Which were denied the waverer once.

Pauline.

We die: which means to say, the whole's removed,
Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin,—
To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.

Sordello.

Feeling God loves us, and that all which errs
Is but a dream which death will dissipate.

Pauline.

I cannot chain my soul: it will not rest
In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere:
It has strange impulse, tendency, desire,
Which nowise I account for nor explain,
But cannot stifle, being bound to trust
All feelings equally to hear all sides:
How can my life indulge them? yet they live,
Referring to some state of life unknown.

Pauline.

Old Age and Death.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute 's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

Prospice.

Take the joys and bear the sorrows—neither with extreme concern!
Living here means nescience simply; 'tis next life that helps to learn.
Shut those eyes, next life will open,—stop those ears, next life will teach
Hearing's office,—close those lips, next life will give the power of speech!
Or, if action more amuse thee than the passive attitude,
Bravely bustle through thy being, busy thee for ill or good,
Reap this life's success or failure! Soon shall things be unperplexed
And the right and wrong, now tangled, lie unravelled in the next.

La Saisiaz.

Old Age and Death.

. . . Stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make prized the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings.

Cleon.

Luther . . . secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,
Supposing death a little altered things.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Old Age and Death.

Age? Why, fear ends there: the contest concluded,
Man *did* live his life, *did* escape from the fray;
Not scratchless but unscathed, he somehow eluded
Each blow fortune dealt him, and conquers to-day:
To-morrow—new chance and fresh strength,—might we say?
Laud then Man's life—no defeat but a triumph!

Parleyings.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
—Pity me?

* * * * *

No, at noon day in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back, as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed—fight on, fare ever
There as here!"

Epilogue.

My life's remainder, which, say what fools will,
Is or should be the best of life,—its fruit.

The Inn Album.

Old Age and Death.

Enough: for you doubt, you hope, O men,
You fear, you agonize, die: what then?
Is an end to your life's work out of ken?

Have you no assurance that, earth at end,
Wrong will prove right? Who made shall mend
In the higher sphere to which yearnings tend?

Rephan.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

By the Fire-side.

And this is death: I understand it all.
New being waits me: new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein;
Which last is Death's affair; and while I speak
Minute by minute he is filling me
With power: and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . but I must not tell;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come.

Paracelsus.

Old Age and Death.

For I say, this is death and the sole death,
When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,
Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
And lack of love from love made manifest.

A Death in the Desert.

OPTIMISM

There shall never be one lost good!

* * * * *

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

Abt Vogler.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself.

Abt Vogler.

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise; are baffled to fight better, sleep to wake.

Epilogue.

Optimism

While I see day succeed the deepest night—
How can I speak but as I know?—My speech
Must be, throughout the darkness, "It will end:
The light that did burn, will burn!"

The Pope.

What if the rose-streak of morning,
Pale and depart in a passion of tears?
Once to have hoped is no matter for scorning!
Love once—e'en love's disappointment endears!
A minute's success pays the failure of years.

Parleyings.

Have you found your life distasteful?
My life did and does smack sweet.
Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?
Mine I saved and hold complete.
Do your joys with age diminish?
When mine fail me, I'll complain.
Must in death your daylight finish?
My sun sets to rise again.

* * * * *

I find earth not gray, but rosy,
Heaven not grim, but fair of hue,
Do I stoop? I pluck a posy;
Do I stand and stare? All 's blue.

At the Mermaid.

And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's,
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?

* * * * *

For every joy is gain,
And gain is gain, however small.

Paracelsus.

. . . . O'er our heaven again cloud closes, until, lo—
Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to pierce its gloom, compelled
By a power and by a purpose which, if no one else behold,
I behold in life, so—hope!

La Saisiaz.

And Deep within my heart of hearts there hid
Ever the confidence, amends for all,
That Heaven repairs what wrong Earth's journey did."

Bifurcation.

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

Pippa Passes.

Optimism. It 's wiser being good than bad;
It 's safer being meek than fierce,
It 's fitter being sane than mad.
My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched:
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

Apparent Failure.

PAIN AND EVIL

Tell me now
What were the bond 'twixt man and man, dost judge,
Pain once abolished? Come, be true! . . .

* * * * *

Put pain from out the world, what room were left
For thanks to God, for love to man?

Ferishtah's Fancies.

Type needs antitype;
As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good,
Needs evil: how were pity understood
Unless by pain?

Francis Furini.

Some think Creation 's meant to show Him forth;
I say it 's meant to hide Him all it can,
And that 's what all the blessed evil 's for.
Its use in Time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
Against that sight till we can bear its stress.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Pain and Evil.

In the eye of God
Pain may have purpose and be justified.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

I reach into the dark,
Feel what I cannot see, and still faith stands.
I can believe this dread machinery
Of sin and sorrow, would confound me else,
Devised,—all pain, at most expenditure
Of pain by Who devised pain,—to evolve,
By new machinery in counterpart,
The moral qualities of man—how else?—
To make him love in turn and be beloved,
Creative and self-sacrificing too,
And thus eventually Godlike.

The Ring and the Book.

Is not God now i' the world His power first made?
Is not His love at issue still with sin
Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?
Love, wrong and pain, what see I else around?

* * * * *

And as I saw the sin and death, even so
See I the need yet transiency of both.

A Death in the Desert.

All pain must be to work some good in the end.

The Ring and the Book.

To change the agency,
The evil whereby good is brought about—
Try to make good do good as evil does—
Were just as if a chemist, wanting white,
And knowing black ingredients bred the dye,
Insisted these, too, should be white, forsooth!
Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

PROGRESS THROUGH SUFFERING

For Mankind springs
Salvation by each hindrance interposed.
They climb; life's view is not at once disclosed
To creatures caught up, on the summit left,
Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft;—
But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.
So range on range, the girdling forests shoot
'Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who scale
Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,
Heartened with each discovery; in their soul,
The Whole they seek by Parts—

Sordello.

Was the trial sore? temptation sharp!
Thank God a second time. . . .

* * * * *

Learning anew the use of soldiership,
Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear,
Loyalty to the life's end: Ruminate,
Deserve the initiatory spasm, once more
Work, be unhappy but bear life, my son!

The Ring and the Book.

Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

Progress through Suffering

* * * * *

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now,
Than flesh helps soul!"

* * * * *

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The future I may face now I have proved the past."

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! What 's come to perfection perishes.

Old Pictures in Florence.

Progress through Suffering.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be prized?

Abt Vogler.

God the strong, God the beneficent,
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,
Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,
Till at the last He puts forth might and saves.

The Ring and the Book.

So try man's foot, if it will creep or climb,
'Mid obstacles in seeming, points that prove
Advantage for who vaults from low to high,
And makes the stumbling-block a stepping-stone.

* * * * *

Life is probation, and the earth no goal
But starting-point of man.

The Ring and the Book.

Happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart.

Easter Day.

Progress through Suffering.

Man is not God, but hath God's end to serve,
A master to obey, a course to take,
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
Grant this, then man must move from old to new,
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
How could man have progression otherwise?

* * * * *

Man . . .
Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
And in this striving this converting air
Into a solid he may grasp and use,
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's and not the beasts': God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
Such progress could no more attend his soul
Were all it struggles after found at first
And guesses changed to knowledge absolute.

A Death in the Desert.

For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true, and those eyes are sure.

The Flight of the Duchess.

Progress through Suffering.

. . Thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too).
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to His feet.

Saul.

Are we not here to learn the good of peace through strife,
Of love, through hate, and reach knowledge by ignorance?

Fifine at the Fair.

RETROSPECT

I never glanced behind to know
If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am—what I am.

* * * * *

I had a noble purpose and the strength
To compass it: but I have stopp'd half-way,
And wrongly given the first-fruits of my toil
To objects little worthy of the gift.
Why linger round them still? Why clench my fault?
Why seek for consolation in defeat,
In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
From ugliness? Why seek to make the most
Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
With mighty effort to redeem the past
And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
To hold a steadfast course till I arrive
At their fit destination and my own?

* * * * *

Wilt thou reject the past
Big with deep warnings . . .
For thee the present
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that past's own shade, when in relief
Its brightness shall stand out.

Paracelsus.

Retrospect.

I am sad, and fain
Would give up all to be but where I was,
Not high as I had been if faithful found,
But low and weak yet full of hope, and sure
Of goodness as of life.

* * * * *

So, aught connected with my early life,
My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
How I look on them—most distinct amid
The fever and the stir of after years!

Pauline.

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hair's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about.

For there I picked up on the heather,
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forget the rest.

Memorabilia.

We loved, sir—used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet!

Confessions.

I am a wanderer: I remember well
One journey, how I feared the track was missed,
So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar
Flashed through the circling clouds: you may conceive
My transport. Soon the vapours closed again,
But I had seen the city, and one such glance
No darkness could obscure: nor shall the present—
A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
I will fight the battle out; a little spent
Perhaps, but still an able combatant.

Paracelsus.

Retrospect.

All my days, I'll go the softlier, sadlier,
For that dream's sake.

Fears and Scruples.

SELF-SACRIFICE

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
In thy success. . . . Let our God's praise
Go bravely through the world at last! What care
Through me or thee?

Paracelsus.

Desire joy, and thank God for it.
Renounce joy for my fellows' sake? That 's joy
Beyond joy.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

How can man love but what he yearns to help?
And that which men think weakness within strength,
But angels know for strength and stronger yet—
What were it else but the first things made new,
But repetition of the miracle,
The divine instance of self-sacrifice
That never ends and aye begins for man?

The Ring and the Book.

Why not desire, for mankind's sake,
That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
That, though I sink, another may succeed?

Self-Sacrifice.

* * * * *

Whatever be my chance or my mischance,
What benefits mankind must glad me too.

Paracelsus.

STRENGTH

Be sure that God
Ne'er dooms to waste, the strength He deigns impart.

* * * * *

Seek
The strength to use, which thou hast spent in getting!
Paracelsus.

He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall
stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh,
that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall
be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to
me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like
this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the
Christ stand!
Saul.

When is man strong until he feels alone? Strength.

* * * * *

All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men
Can have such chance yet fail so signally.
Colombe's Birthday.

Strength and utility charm more than grace.
Aristophanes' Apology.

TEMPTATION

You know not what temptation is, nor how
'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.

* * * * *

These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption: to be mortal,
Is to be plied with trials manifold.

Paracelsus.

Why comes temptation but for man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph? Pray
"Lead us into no such temptations, Lord!"
Yea, but, O Thou whose servants are the bold,
Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight
That so he may do battle and have praise!

The Ring and the Book.

The Devil, that old stager . . . Temptation.
. . . who leads
Downward, perhaps, but fiddles all the way!
Red Cotton Night-Cap Country.

The thing I pity most
In men is—action prompted by surprise
Of anger . . .
. . . Trust me, blood-warmth never yet
Betokened strong will!
The Forgiveness.

TRUTH

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear conception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error; and to *know*
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstrations of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us; where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour.

* * * * *

. . . May not truth be lodged alike in all,
The lowest as the highest? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds a soul
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
Truth issues proudly.

Paracelsus.

Truth is the strong thing.
Let man's life be true!

In a Balcony.

Hence
Must truth be casual truth, elicited
In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread
So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time
Of the world's story has not truth, the prime
Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled
The world's course right, been really in the world
—Content the while with some mean spark by dint
Of some chance blow, the solitary hint
Of buried fire, which, rip earth's breast, would stream
Sky-ward!

Sordello.

Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover.

Christmas Eve.

Count it crime to let a truth slip.

Fra Lippo Lippi.

God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
As midway help till he reach fact indeed.

A Death in the Desert.

Truth.

Dost thou blame
A soul that strives but to see plain, speak true,
Truth at all hazards? Oh, this false for real,
This emptiness which feigns solidity,—
Ever some grey that's white, and dun that's black,
When shall we rest upon the thing itself
Not on its semblance?—Soul—too weak, forsooth,
To cope with fact—wants fiction everywhere!
Mine tires of falsehood: truth at any cost.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

How sad when men have parted with truth's peace
For falsest fancy's sake.

* * * * *

Even now I recognize
The shift, the change from last to past—discern
Faintly how life is truth and truth is good.

Pauline.

. . . Truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
Act up to our truth perceived,
However feebly.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

Weakness never needs be falseness; truth is truth in each degree,
Thunder-pealed by God to nature, whispered by my soul to me.

La Saisiaz.

I thirst for truth,
But shall not drink it till I reach the source.

The Ring and the Book.

Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth
And power emerge, but also when strange chance
Ruffles its current . . .
When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,
Excess or languor, oftenest death's approach,
Peril, deep joy or woe.

Paracelsus.

Were't not for God . . . what hope of truth—
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with men?

A Soul's Tragedy.

Hear the truth, and bear the truth,
And bring the truth to bear on all you are
And do, assured that only good comes thence
Whate'er the shape good take!

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

Truth. Truths escape
Time's insufficient garniture.

Charles Avison.

WORK

Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
Our time so brief, 'tis clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
We will be wise in time: What though our work
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way? 'Twere little praise
Did full resources wait on our goodwill
At every turn.

Paracelsus.

Ourselves, the only witness to what work our life evolved,
Only to ourselves proposing problems proper to be solved
By ourselves alone,—who working ne'er shall know if work bear fruit.

* * * * *

Why repine? There's ever someone lives although ourselves be dead!

La Saisiaz.

Work. No work begun shall ever pause for death.

The Ring and the Book.

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly He trod
Paradise, His presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we;—there is no last nor first.

Pippa Passes.

Men of action these!—
Who, seeing just as little as you please,
Yet turn that little to account,—engage
With, do not gaze at—carry on a stage,
The work o' the world, not merely make report
The work existed ere their day!

* * * * *

God has conceded two sights to a man—
One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,
The other, of the minutes' work, man's first
Step to the plan's completeness: what's dispersed
Save hope of that supreme step which, descried
Earliest, was meant still to remain untried,
Only to give you heart to take your own
Step, and there stay—leaving the rest alone?

Sordello.

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "Work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount.

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

No, it must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he
Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
May clearly scan the little he effects:
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Paracelsus.

Work freely done should balance happiness
Fully enjoyed.

A Forgiveness.

Work.

All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess,
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present . . . with the hopeful past!

* * * * *

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?

The Last Ride Together.

Did I work aright
With powers appointed me?—since powers denied
Concern me nothing.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

Wherever's will
To do, there's plenty to be done.

Sordello.

Do thy day's work, dare
Refuse no help thereto, since help refused
Is hindrance sought and found.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

WORSHIP

. . This sky of Thine, that I now walk under,
And glory in Thee for, as I gaze
Thus, thus! 'Oh, let men keep their ways
Of seeking Thee in a narrow shrine—
Be this my way! And this is mine!

* * * *

Our best is bad, nor bears Thy test;
Still, it should be our very best.
I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit,
Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
And in beauty, as even we require it.—

* * * * *

This tolerance is a genial mood!

* * * * *

One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,
And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
A value for religion's self,

Worship. A carelessness about the sects of it.
Let me enjoy my own conviction,
Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness,
Still spying there some dereliction
Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness!
Better a mild indifferentism,
Teaching that both our faiths . . .
Originally had one colour.

* * * * *

Needs must there be one way, our chief
Best way of worship: let me strive
To find it, and when found, contrive
My fellows also take their share!
This constitutes my earthly care:
God's is above it, and distinct,
For I, a man, with men am linked
And not a brute with brutes; no gain
That I experience, must remain
Unshared: but should my best endeavour
To share it, fail—subsisteth ever
God's care above, and I exult
That God, by God's own ways occult,
May—doth, I will believe—bring back
All wanderers to a single track.

* * * * *

I, then, in ignorance and weakness, Worship.
Taking God's help, have attained to think
My heart does best to receive in meekness
That mode of worship, as most to His mind,
Where earthly aids being cast behind,
His All in All appears serene
With the thinnest human veil between.

Christmas Eve.

In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent.
. . . Then he must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was:
For nothing can compensate his mistake
On such a point, the man himself being judge.

Bishop Blougram's Apology.

The human heart's best; . . .
. . . You probe its wants and needs,
And hopes and fears, then try what creeds
Meet these most aptly.

Easter Day.

CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

00043683

Digitized with financial assistance from
Ms.Swati Thakar
on 13 March, 2020